Regional Stability of Central Asia: Confidence-Building Measures (CBM)

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Abstract: This article gives a definition of confidence-building measures (CBM) in Central Asia and significance of multilateral cooperation on security matters in the region (the author refers to Central Asia as “the region”). The paper studied practical implementation of the activities of Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building measures (CICA) as the main instrument of interaction in the region. Along with the task, the author highlights the significance of the integration processes as a key factor for the construction of confidence-building measures in the region.

Key words: Central Asia · CICA Process · Confidence-Building Measures · Security

INTRODUCTION

Confidence-building measures (CBM) is relatively a new term in Central Asia, broadly defined, can be any set of unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral actions or procedures that act “to reduce military tensions between a set or sets of states, during or after actual conflict” [1].

Despite the fact that the term was not used in the region during the Cold War, it has become a part of diplomatic cooperation in the region following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Some in Asia, however, have voiced resistance to applying European style CBMs in an Asian context, claiming that the security environment in Europe was absolutely different from Asia since Europe had clearly identified adversaries. Modern CBMs can be qualified as military or non-military measures. According to Stimson center publications, “CBMs are diverse national security tools-such as hotlines, people-to-people exchange, prior notification of military exercises and cross-border economic projects-that can help defuse tension, resolve misunderstandings and promote cooperation to address security concerns” [2].

The economic depression in the regional context, armed conflicts, non-settlement of inter-ethnic and territorial disputes, entry the zone of the competition of world force centers-the majority of these factors are available and increasing in the Central Asian geopolitical space. These conditions predetermined the importance geopolitical determinants for the regional integration in Central Asia. The issues of creation of regional structure on security matters are the integral factor. For the intercontinental countries of Central Asia the security may be provided on transferred level that demands in practice to reject the traditional canons of geopolitics between countries and review of narrowly understood approach to national interests. In the historical plan for the Central Asian region the definite system unity based on the territorial community and original labor division is specific. But at the same time an internal space of Central Asia has definite differentiation.

The neighborhood with two great countries, China and Russia, definitely singles out a geopolitical distinction at the northern and eastern borders of the region. Some problems in the relations between new countries of Central Asia and China from one side and Russia from the other one determined the similarity of some external political interests and goals of the Central Asian countries.

Closeness of the Central Asian countries to Muslim states to some extent also promotes the consolidation. Radical forms of Islam present a challenge to the regional development. Post-soviet elite of the Central Asian countries having soviet roots very painfully considers...
the efforts of Islam politicization in their countries. Secular character of the statehood and also the aspiration to resist sprouts of radical Islam serves as a uniting factor. At the southern boundaries of the region “the Muslim vector” presents also one of the main directions of external political strategies of the Central Asian countries. These countries became the objects of geopolitical competition for regional leadership. Under these conditions post-soviet countries have to consecutively maintain careful relations with Muslim countries, keep away from efforts to be involved into historical conflicts and pragmatically define main action plans in three priority spheres: national security, economic cooperation and cultural contacts. Central Asia was on the junction of international processes during the first ten years of its independence until the events of September 11, 2001, radically changed the situation. The Central Asian states actively participated in the peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan; Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan hosted US military bases, Kazakhstan opened use of its air corridors. Kazakhstan, as well as other Central Asian states, is interested in increased security cooperation with other countries. It was a high time to institutionalize this cooperation and create new system of multilateral cooperation.

In line with this institutionalization, the idea of convening the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) was first proposed by Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on 5 October 1992, at the 47th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The moving spirit behind this initiative was the aspiration to set up an efficient and acceptable structure for ensuring peace and security in Asia [3]. According to D. Bakishev “Unlike other regions in the world, Asia did not have such a structure at that time and earlier attempts to create a suitable structure had not been very successful. This initiative was supported by a number of Asian countries who felt that such a structure was an imperative of the time” [4]. “CICA has become a new model of security structures in Asia for several reasons. First, CICA is the only forum on security, which brings together most of the Asian countries. The share of its members accounts more than 90% of the population and territory of Asia. Second, in the modern conditions Asian countries have come to realize that there is no alternative to respond modern challenges and threats than approaching joint steps” [5]. CICA stretches from Turkey in the west to Republic of Korea in the east encompassing countries of Eurasia; Middle East, South, South East and East Asia. This is the only platform outside of United Nations where countries, which do not have diplomatic relations, come together to exchange views and resolve issues of common interest. At the first stage of its formation, member states had been preparing an adequate legal basis. They accepted the Declaration on the principles guiding relations between the CICA Member States adopted at the first Ministerial Meeting in 1999, the Almaty Act adopted at the first Summit Meeting in 2002 and the Catalogue of CICA Confidence Building Measures adopted during the Second Ministerial Meeting in 2004. These main documents laid down the comprehensive approaches for addressing contemporary issues like conflict resolution, international terrorism, disarmament and arms control, confidence building measures, drug trafficking, illegal sale of fire arms and nuclear materials, humanitarian issues including human trafficking, promotion of trade and well being of the people of Asia. From 2007 CICA has started the process of implementation of confidence building measures. Twelve member states are coordinating confidence building measures in wide range of issues including interaction in cultural, religious and educational affairs, tourism and development of small and medium enterprises, information technology, energy security, development of secure transport corridors, environment, disaster management, drug trafficking and meeting new threats and challenges. CICA will soon initiate deliberations on military-political issues which are vital for creating a common and indivisible area of security in Asia [4]. In this respect the CICA activity in the region stipulated by the efforts to create beneficial from geopolitical sense combination in the hierarchy of the different states interests.

At the present stage of international institutions’ development, the idea of ? Nursultan Nazarbayev to create CICA was an appeal to the world community to transit from an extensive approach of assessment the effectiveness of acting structures to an intensive, in order to formulate long-term security strategy of the region.

According to comparative analysis of S. Sevastianov “The results of cooperation in other regions did not follow the typology of Euro-Atlantic security model, which did not allow researchers to move beyond the general theory of international relations and to develop an integrated approach to define regions, including the factors of security, economy, identity and integration” [6]. Thus, according to functional security one security area may comprise several contiguous sub-regions with no connection to each other by a classical criterion of the term “region” (cultural, economic interaction). In this context, the CICA process has become one of the most prospective models of comprehensive security systems in the region.
Traditionally, CBMs can be defined as measures taken by states to reduce threat and mistrust existing between them, in order to reduce a threat of war. The concept of CBMs originated from the attempts to avoid a nuclear threat that could occur as a result of an accident during the Cold War. In fact, confidence-building measures were perceived as cooperation in the military-political sphere to ease tensions between states.

The most appropriate way to create active CBMs M. Krepon applied “building-block approach if there exists trust in any tense region” [7]. Nowadays, CBMs go beyond the traditional security concepts. The leaders of the CICA Member States recognized that in the interconnected and interdependent world of the XXI century CBMs are important both in the social and economic dimension and military and political. Therefore CICA Catalogue identifies five dimensions for the implementation of CBMs:

- **Economic Dimension**
- **Environment Dimension**
- **Human Dimension**
- **New issues of instability (terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, trans-border crime, human trafficking, money laundering, illicit trade in small arms and light weapons)**
- **Military and Political Dimension** [8].

M. Laumulin points out that “the CICA will be one of the effective mechanisms to promote an atmosphere of confidence in the region as well as an important factor in establishing a security system in Asia. However, the process of CICA development will take a long time and require joint efforts by all the member states. Thus it is important to provide an interaction mechanism between Asia Pacific and Central Asian states within the framework of CICA. More active involvement of Asian Pacific region states into the CICA process would provide a new impetus to their security cooperation, something Kazakhstan strongly supports”[9].

Thesis on lack of interaction of the Central Asian security system at first glance seems clear. Despite the absence of major armed conflicts, there are a number of regional issues, constantly riveting the attention of international community such as:

- Internal tensions between different ethnic groups;
- Religious extremism;
- Drug trafficking and international crime;
- Unsettled boundary issues;
- Pollution of transboundary rivers;
- Unequal distribution of natural/energy resources, etc.

Nevertheless, the existing system of regional stability can effectively eliminate the risk emerging of the problems that can bring them to interstate conflicts. Existing regional structures are able to coordinate positions and decline the parties to cooperate with each other in order to resolve conflicts. Interstate conflicts are inhibited by a political will of guarantors of stability which is aimed to respond to explosive processes on the early stages of their development [10].

The threat to stability and security in the Central Asia can be represented not only by interstate conflicts but mainly by internal conflicts, with a wide range of participants and it is quite a difficult thing to clearly define the opposing sides. P. Tsygankov defines “stability as an ability to suppress destructive impact inside the system” [11]. Integral stability is the main idea of modern security transformation in the Central Asia. In the modern conditions, each Central Asian state should streamline its basis of international cooperation. Improvement of collective security system in Central Asia-is one of the major goals in this connection”.

Central Asia has certain contour outlines but the impact of the security issues will make a double effect:

- This process as a consolidated factor will be determined by modern tendencies to post-bipolar epoch related to the formation of a new system of international relations.
- As a disintegrated factor that stipulated by counter-tendency of objective and historical reanimation in changed frames of geopolitical interests of neighboring countries.

Problems of the Central Asian countries and the regional organizations still consist in search of the adequate measures of combating the causes of instability. Therefore, the strategic objective for the region stands to achieve not simply sustainable development of security but to achieve a condition of threats’ absence. In this condition the system will be not endangering by new threats, in order to achieve this sustainable security all the Central Asian countries must develop joint policy of security cooperation on a basis of confidence-building.
REFERENCES